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Gorbachev's visit to France seen as ploy to divide allies

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GENEVA, Switzerland — The upcoming visit to France of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev is but another episode in Moscow's continuing effort to drive a wedge between the United States and its NATO allies, said Otto Von Habsburg, 73, longtime member of the European Parliament and a guiding light of the European unity movement.

In a speech here Friday, Mr. Von Habsburg warned that "Gorbachev's principal reason for meeting with President [Francois] Mitterrand is to try to keep the pressure on Europe to split with the United States."

The Soviet leader is scheduled to meet with Mr. Mitterrand Oct. 2-5 in Paris for a round of talks prior to his meeting in Geneva with President Reagan November 19-20.

Last fall, Moscow launched an unprecedented campaign to influence voting in several Western European nations considering accepting U.S. missiles to counter the Soviet Union's deployment of SS-20 medium-range ballistic missiles.

Despite what has been described as the Kremlin's ham-fisted attempt

to interject itself in Western European affairs, NATO has gone ahead with the deployment of U.S. cruise and Pershing II missiles.

"A great deal has been written about how Gorbachev is preoccupied with domestic issues" facing the Soviet Union, Mr. Von Habsburg said. "But if there is to be any demonstrable change in Soviet policy, it will come not in the domestic arena but in the area of foreign affairs."

Mr. Gorbachev, said Mr. Von Habsburg, "is a creature of the KGB," and as such he is "shifting the equation of power in Moscow away from the military — which enjoyed the favor and patronage showered upon it during the Brezhnev and Chernenko periods — to the Committee for State Security."

As an indication of this shift — which he said began with the rule of Mr. Gorbachev's mentor, Yuri Andropov, head of the KGB for 15 years before assuming power after Leonid Brezhnev's death — Mr. Von Habsburg pointed to the rise of Eduard Shevardnadze from the central committee to the Foreign Ministry.

"Shevardnadze's main claim to fame in the U.S.S.R. is that he invented some unusual forms of tor-

ture," Mr. Von Habsburg said, adding "that was a remarkable feat even for the Soviet Union."

Mr. Shevardnadze, who still holds the rank of general in the Interior Ministry's security forces, was named foreign minister in early June, replacing Andrei Gromyko, who was named president.

Mr. Von Habsburg, who spoke to members of the American International Club, an organization of U.S. citizens who live and work in the Geneva area, said, "The balance of world forces has changed thanks to the courage of the United States to rearm."

President Reagan "has kept the dictators in check," Mr. Von Habsburg said, adding that the result has been to deny the Soviet Union the ability to act on its "expansionist tendencies because of a fixation with what America might do."

"Make no mistake about it," he said. "There are two simple reasons why Western Europe is free today: The U.S. garrison in West Berlin and the American forces in NATO."

Mr. Von Habsburg added, however, that this state of affairs cannot continue indefinitely, that the economics of stationing large numbers of forces abroad dictates that "this protection will one day come to an end."